

### REMARKS

The present Amendment will greatly facilitate prosecution of the application. The new claims more distinctly set forth and claim the invention. Currently, claims 1-13 have been cancelled and claims 14-36 are pending. No new matter has been added and the amendments and new claims are supported throughout the specification and drawings.

Claim 1, which has been cancelled by the amendments enclosed herewith, was rejected pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by *Imamura* (U.S. Pat. No. 5,802,831 (“*Imamura* ‘831”)). With respect to pending independent claims 14 and 33, *Imamura* ‘831 cannot support a rejection pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) because it lacks the limitation that piecing occurs when the rear and front pairs of rollers attain a constant rotational speed.

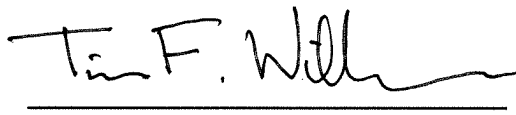
Applicant notes that a claim is anticipated under 35 U.S. C. § 102 only if each and every element as set forth in the claim is found, either expressly or inherently described, in a single prior art reference. M.P.E.P. § 2131. Because *Imamura* ‘831 lacks the limitation that piecing occurs when the rear and front pair of rollers attain a constant rotational speed, it cannot support a rejection pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 102(b).

In summary, Applicant submits that the present application is in complete condition for allowance and favorable action, therefore, is respectfully requested. Should any issues remain after consideration of this response, however, then Examiner Hurley is invited and encouraged to telephone the undersigned at his convenience in the hopes of expediting prosecution.

Please charge any deficiencies or credit any overpayments required by this Response to Deposit Account No. 04-1403.

Respectfully submitted,

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